AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 3, line 32 with the following:

Thus, in certain embodiments, the invention is directed to a method for recombinantly expressing a mature Streptococcus pyogenes exotoxin B (SpeB) polypeptide in a host cell, the method comprising (i) transforming, transducing, transfecting or infecting a host cell with a polycistronic plasmid, the polycistronic plasmid comprising (a) a polynucleotide sequence encoding a SpeB pro-polypeptide domain and (b) a polynucleotide sequence encoding a mature SpeB polypeptide, and (ii) culturing the host cell under conditions which permit the expression of the mature SpeB polypeptide and the SpeB pro-polypeptide domain by the host cell, and wherein the mature SpeB polypeptide is soluble in the host cell. Thus, in the polycistronic plasmid system of the present invention, a single promoter (e.g., a T7 promoter) drives the expression of a polycistronic mRNA transcript, wherein the polycistronic mRNA encodes two or more polypeptides in their correct reading frame (e.g., a SpeB pro-polypeptide domain and a mature SpeB polypeptide). In certain embodiments, the SpeB pro-polypeptide domain is further defined as a polypeptide comprising amino acid residues 28 through 145 of SEQ ID NO:2 and the mature SpeB polypeptide is further defined as a polypeptide comprising amino acid residues 146 through 398 of SEQ ID NO:2. In a preferred embodiment, the cysteine at amino acid residue 192 of the mature SpeB polypeptide is substituted by a serine. In another embodiment, the mature SpeB polypeptide is immunogenic in a mammalian host. In yet another embodiment, an antibody specific for the mature SpeB polypeptide cross-reacts with a wild-type SpeB polypeptide and neutralizes SpeB polypeptide activity. In certain preferred embodiments, the plasmid is a T7 promoter-containing plasmid. In one particular embodiment, the T7 promoter-containing plasmid is selected from the group consisting of pET, pRSET, pCRT7-CTTOPO and pIVeX. In another preferred embodiment, the host cell is a bacterial cell. In certain embodiments, the bacterial host cell is E. coli. In yet other embodiments, the E. coli is a strain selected from the group consisting of BLR(DE3), BLR(DE3)pLysS, AD494(DE3), AD494(DE3)pLysS, BL21(DE3), BL21(DE3) pLysS, BL21(DE3)pLysE, BL21 (DE3)pLacI, BL21trxB(DE3), BL21 trxB(DE3)pLysS,

HMS174(DE3), HMS174(DE3)pLysS, HMS174(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLacI, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLacI, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3), ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysS, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysE, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLacI, ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3), ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLysS and ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLacI.

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 5, line 1 with the following:

In other embodiments, the invention is directed to a method for recombinantly expressing a mature SpeB polypeptide in a host cell comprising (a) transforming, transducing, transfecting or infecting a host cell with (i) a plasmid comprising a polynucleotide sequence encoding a SpeB pro-polypeptide domain and (ii) a plasmid comprising a polynucleotide sequence encoding a mature SpeB polypeptide; and (b) culturing the host cell under conditions suitable to co-express the SpeB pro-polypeptide domain and the mature SpeB polypeptide, wherein the mature SpeB polypeptide is soluble in the host cell. In certain embodiments, the SpeB pro-polypeptide domain is further defined as a polypeptide comprising amino acid residues 28 through 145 of SEQ ID NO:2 and the mature SpeB polypeptide is further defined as a polypeptide comprising amino acid residues 146 through 398 of SEQ ID NO:2. In one preferred embodiment, the cysteine at amino acid residue 192 of the mature SpeB polypeptide is substituted by a serine. In other embodiments, the mature SpeB polypeptide is immunogenic in a mammalian host. In yet other embodiments, an antibody specific for the mature SpeB polypeptide cross-reacts with a wild-type SpeB polypeptide and neutralizes SpeB polypeptide activity. In another preferred embodiment, the plasmid is a T7 promoter-containing plasmid. In one particular embodiment, the T7 promoter-containing plasmid is selected from the group consisting of pET, pRSET, pCRT7-CTTOPO and pIVeX. In yet other embodiments, the host cell is a bacterial cell. In one preferred embodiment, the host cell is E. coli, wherein the E. coli is a strain selected from the group consisting of BLR(DE3), BLR(DE3)pLysS, AD494(DE3), AD494(DE3)pLysS, BL21(DE3), BL21(DE3) pLysS, BL21(DE3)pLysE,

BL21(DE3)pLacI, BL21trxB(DE3), BL21trxB(DE3)pLysS, HMS174(DE3), HMS174(DE3)pLysS, HMS174(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLacI, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLacI, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3), ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysS, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysE, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLacI, ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3), ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLysS and ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLacI.

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 30, line 11 with the following:

Prokaryotes are also used for expression. The aforementioned strains, as well as E. coli strains such as W3110 (ATCC No. 273325), BLR(DE3), BLR(DE3)pLysS, AD494(DE3), AD494(DE3)pLysS, BL21(DE3), BL21(DE3) pLysS, BL21(DE3)pLysE, BL21(DE3)pLacI, BL21trxB(DE3), BL21trxB(DE3)pLysS, HMS174(DE3), HMS174(DE3)pLysS, HMS174(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMI(DE3)pLacI, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3), ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysS, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLysE, ~~Origami~~ ORIGAMIB(DE3)pLacI, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3), ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysS, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLysE, ~~Rosetta~~ ROSETTA(DE3)pLacI, ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3), ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLysS and ~~Tuner~~ TUNER(DE3)pLacI, bacilli such as Bacillus subtilis, or other enterobacteriaceae such as Salmonella typhimurium or Serratia marcesans, and various Pseudomonas species are used.